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STATE FOR NEA/PI AND NEA/ARP, ABU DHABI FOR MEPI (HWECHSEL,  
MHOPKINS)

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SUBJECT: READOUT OF NDI MEETINGS WITH KUWAITI POLITICAL  
ASSOCIATIONS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Matt Tueller for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior NDI representative for Kuwait Kelley Jones briefed PolOffs on her April 3-7 meetings with Kuwaiti political associations. She said the organizations were open to receiving NDI training and assistance, but liberal groups expressed concerns about being viewed as too closely affiliated with an American NGO. To address these concerns, the Chairman of Kuwait Graduates Society suggested using his organization as an umbrella for the training programs, the approach preferred by Post. NDI will return later this month to conduct follow-on meetings with the associations to identify specific areas of need and develop possible training programs. End summary.

¶2. (C) PolOffs met April 7 with Kelley Jones, the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) Senior Representative for Kuwait, for a debrief of her April 3-7 meetings with a number of local political associations (political parties have no legal status in Kuwait) arranged by post. Jones met with the Secretary Generals of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA,

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liberal), the Kuwait Democratic Forum (KDF, liberal), the National Democratic Movement (NDM, liberal), the Justice and Peace Grouping (moderate Shi'a), and the Islamic National Consensus Movement (INCM, moderate Shi'a). In addition, she met with MP Nasser Al-Sane, the Assistant Secretary General of the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood, and independent liberal MPs Saleh Al-Fadhala and Ali Al-Rashed. Overall, Jones was positive about her interactions with the political associations and the opportunities for further engagement. She said the groups were receptive to receiving NDI assistance and training aimed at helping them improve their organizational structure, strategic planning, membership recruitment, public relations, and youth outreach.

¶3. (C) Jones believed the three liberal political associations and the Justice and Peace Grouping would benefit most from NDI assistance since they were the most poorly organized, particularly when compared to the ICM, which in her view was highly organized and very sophisticated in its operations. However, she said all three liberal organizations expressed concern that by receiving training from NDI they could be labeled as too pro-American, something their critics already accuse them of. The ICM and the Justice and Peace Grouping did not/not share these concerns and seemed very open to working with NDI. Al-Sane stressed the importance of including as many political associations as possible in any training program to avoid being seen as biased in favor of liberals, something he suggested many Kuwaitis' already believed about NDI's activities in Kuwait.

¶4. (C) Saud Al-Enezi, the Chairman of the Kuwait Graduates

Society and a member of the NDA, suggested the training programs could be conducted under the umbrella of the Kuwait Graduates Society, a well-respected, legal NGO, in partnership with NDI. This way, the Kuwait Graduates Society could be responsible for inviting participants to training seminars, not NDI, thus alleviating the liberal organizations' concerns about being seen as too closely affiliated with NDI. Al-Sane suggested another alternative: the leaders of the political associations could meet and agree on training needs, then approach NDI jointly to request assistance in these areas. He believed this approach would foster cooperation between the political associations and would be acceptable to the government. Jones was somewhat skeptical that the liberal organizations would be willing to cooperate in such a way with Islamist groups, given the often contentious relations between them. PolOffs advised that working through the Kuwait Graduates Society was Post's preferred approach.

15. (C) Jones said Peter Dimitroff, NDI's Country Director for Yemen who attended most of the meetings in Kuwait, would conduct follow-on meetings with the political associations at the end of April to identify specific areas of need and begin developing possible training programs.

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